

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) PREPARES FOR
NATIONAL CONGRESS

REF: ROME 17696, DEC 24, 1974

SUMMARY. AMIDST A FEELING OF INCREASED PUBLIC ACCEPTABILITY AND CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM THAT THE PARTY IS APPROACHING THE GOVERNING ARENA, THE PCI IS MAKING FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR ITS 14TH NATIONAL CONGRESS. AS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE LAST CONGRESS WHEN LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS HEADED THE AGENDA, THE FOCUS OF ATTENTION OF THIS CONGRESS WILL BE ON PARTY TACTICS IN THE FACE OF A CHANGING POLITICAL SITUATION AND UPCOMING ADMINISTRATIVE, AND POSSIBLY NATIONAL, ELECTIONS. THE CONGRESS IS NOT EXPECTED TO PRODUCE ANY SURPRISES. THE DEBATE IS EXPECTED TO FOLLOW CLOSELY THE LINES LAID DOWN IN SECRETARY GENERAL BERLINGUER'S REPORT TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE LAST DECEMBER. END SUMMARY.

1. FINAL PREPARATIONS ARE NOW BEING MADE FOR THE CONVENING OF THE 14TH NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE PCI WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN ROME FROM MARCH 18 THROUGH 23. THERE APPEARS TO BE A CONSENSUS AMONG THE PCI LEADERSHIP THAT THE CONGRESS IS TAKING PLACE UNDER AUSPICIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES. PRE-CONGRESS PARTY GATHERINGS ON BOTH THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS HAVE
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REVEALED A SUBSTANTIALLY BROADER PARTICIPATION IN PARTY

ACTIVITIES THAN AT ANY TIME IN RECENT YEARS. THE LEADERSHIP APPARENTLY FEELS THAT AMONG THE GENERAL POPULACE THERE IS GREATER ACCEPTANCE OF THE PCI AS A DEMOCRATIC FORCE IN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SPECTRUM THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE POST-WAR PERIOD. FINALLY, JUDGING FROM THEIR PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS AND NUMEROUS PRESS INTERVIEWS IN RECENT WEEKS, THE SENIOR LEVELS OF THE PARTY ARE CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC THAT THE PCI IS INEXORABLY MOVING CLOSER TO A PIECE OF THE GOVERNING PIE.

2. WHEREAS THE LAST CONGRESS IN 1972 IS REMEMBERED PRINCIPALLY FOR ITS APPROVAL OF THE TRANSFER OF THE LEADERSHIP MANTLE FROM LONGO TO BERLINGUER, THE FOCUS OF THE FORTHCOMING CONGRESS WILL BE CONCENTRATED NOT ON PERSONNEL CHANGES BUT ON POLITICAL TACTICS. IN THE LEADERSHIP'S VIEW, THESE HAVE A PARTICULAR URGENCY IN VIEW OF THE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY, WITH REGIONAL ELECTIONS IN THE OFING AND THE POSSIBILITY OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS LATER IN THE YEAR. THE CENTRAL FOCUS WILL BE ON BERLINGUER'S PROPOSAL FOR A HISTORIC COMPROMISE (COMPROMESSO STORICO) WHICH HE ADVANCED IN THE FALL OF 1973 AND TO WHICH HE DEVOTED A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF HIS REPORT TO THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE LAST LECEMBER (REFTEL).

3. VIRTUALLY ALL LOCAL OBSERVERS ARE AGREED THAT THE CONGRESS WILL PRODUCE NO SURPRISES. TO THE EXTENT THAT DIFFERENCES OF OPINIONMIGHT EMERGE DURING THE CONGRESS DEBATE, THEY WOULD BE ISSUES QUESTIONING THE TIMING AND/OR THE VALIDITY OF THE COMPROMESSO STORICO, WITH ITS INHERENT SIDE ISSUES SUCH AS RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES AND ITALY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO. ON THE SIDE ISSUES, PRE-CONGRESS DEBATE HAS REVEALED THAT AT LEAST SOME PORTIONS OF THE BASE OF THE PCI FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE RECENT SHIFT IN POLITICAL TACTICS, PARTICULARLY THE DEEMPHASIZING OF MARXIST CLASSIC AND REVOLUTIONARY GOALS WITH WHICH LONG-TIME MEMBERS HAVE BEEN INSTILLED. PCI SOURCES GENERALLY FEEL THAT FRANK DEBATE AT THE LOCAL LEVELS HAS DISPELLED THESE MISAPPREHENSIONS TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY WILL NOT MAINFEST THEMSELVES AT THE CONGRESS. ANOTHER AREA OF POSSIBLE OPEN CONTESTATION IS OVER THE NATURE OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) MOVEMENT AS A PARTY AND THE TYPE OF EVENTUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH

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THE DC WHICH THE PCI SHOULD SEEK IN WORKING TOWARD THE COMPROMESSO STORICO. WHILE BERLINGUER HAS INSISTED THAT THE COMPROMESSO STORICO IS A LONG TERM PROCESS WHICH CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY AFTER A SHIFT IN DC POLICIES AND TACTICS, SOME PCI LEADERS SUCH AS GIORGIO AMENDOLA BELIEVE THAT THE PROCESS CAN BE SPEEDED UP BY DEMANDING LESS CHANGE FROM THE DC. ON THE OTHER SIDE AIS A PREPORTEDLY SMALL GROUP CENTERED AROUND PIETRO INGRAO WHICH ARGUES THAT A COMPROMESSO

STORICO CAN BE ACIEVED ONLY BY DEALING WITH THE LEFT-WING
CURRENTS OF THE DC.

4. THE PCI HAS INVITED ABOUT 100 FOREIGN POLITICAL PARTIES,
MOSTLY COMMUNIST, TO SEND OBSERVERS TO THE CONGRESS. WHILE
THE LEVEL OF MOST DELEGATIONS HAS NOT YET BEEN CONVEYED TO THE
PCI, VIRTUALLY ALL INVITED PARTIES HAVE SIGNALLED THEIR
INTENTION TO BE REPRESENTED. (AS OF MARCH 6 THE LEVEL OF
SOVIET DELEGATION HAD NOT YET BEEN TRANSMITTED TO THE PCI.)
THE PCI REPORTEDLY BELIEVES IT HAS GAINED INCREASED ACCEPT-
ABILITY IN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CIRCLES IN RECENT YEARS
AND EXPECTS THIS TO BE DEMONSTRATED BY THE NATURE AND LEVEL
OF THE FOREIGN PARTICIPATION IN THE CONGRESS. ON THIS FRONT,
THE ONLY POTENTIALLY CONTENTIOUS ISSUE IS THE PCI'S CONTINUING
COOL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CZECHOSLOVAK PARTY.

5. COMMENT. ON A NATIONAL BASIS WE EXPECT THE CONGRESS TO
ATTRACT MORE ATTENTION THAN ANY PCI GATHERING IN THE POST-
1948 ERA. IT WILL STIMULATE ADDITIONAL DEBATE INSIDE AND
OUTSIDE THE PARTY ON THE COMPROMESSO STORICO AND THE ROLE
THE PCI IS TO PLAY ON THE POLITICAL SCENE IN THE COMING
YEARS. FINALLY, IT WILL PROVIDE THE PCI WITH A POTENT FORUM
FROM WHICH TO KICK-OFF ITS CAMPAIGN FOR THE IMPORTANT
REGIONAL ELECTIONS EXPECTED TO BE HELD IN JUNE.
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